# SUMMARY

## 2003 NOAA FISHERIES CONSTITUENT SESSIONS

## Gulf of Mexico Region

Washington, D.C.
December, 2003

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many individuals are responsible for making the 2003 Constituent Sessions for the Gulf of Mexico region a success. To acknowledge the contributions of each of these individuals by name is not possible because so many people and organizations assisted in this endeavor. We especially thank the participants for sharing their views during the sessions. Without their participation, the constituent sessions would not have been successful.

We thank the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) for all their support, both financial and in-kind. It is gratifying to be part of a process in which a federal agency actively seeks its constituents' opinions on important issues. Dr. William Hogarth, Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries, participated in each of the constituent's sessions. Without his participation, the process would not have been so well received.

Finally, we thank the Pacific States Fishery Management Commission for selecting **M**errell**K**atsouros LLP to help with the 2003 Constituent Sessions. We have learned a great deal from listening to the fisheries stakeholders and we hope that knowledge is reflected in our reports.

# **M**ERRELL**K**ATSOUROS LLP

**M**errell**K**atsouros LLP is a registered limited liability partnership in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Mary Hope Katsouros, Esq. and William Merrell, PhD, founded the **M**errell**K**atsouros Partnership in June of 2002. The Partnership focuses on developing policies that balance the use and conservation of our ocean and coastal resources. The Partnership also provides public education on marine resource issues. Core competencies at **M**errell**K**atsouros LLP include the abilities to understand complex interactions of human systems with natural systems at local, regional and national scales and to apply these understandings to the design of governance principles and management systems. **M**errell**K**atsouros LLP personnel are recognized experts in formulating strategic approaches to issues and in designing specific solutions to critical issues by taking a vision or concept to goal statements, then to definitive objectives, and finally to performance measures.

Mary Hope Katsouros and William J. Merrell of **M**errell**K**atsouros LLP prepared this report as part of the requirements of their Contract with the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission. The series of reports produced under this contract reflect the views and interpretation of **M**errell**K**atsouros LLP and not those of the National Marine Fisheries Service or the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission. **M**errell**K**atsouros LLP is solely responsible for the report and its contents.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**PAGE**

# CHAPTER 1

# THE GULF OF MEXICO REGION

## 1.1 Origin and Description of the Project

Present-day laws, policies, and paradigms encompassing management of U.S. Marine Fisheries can be traced back to the recommendations of a 1969 report, *Our Nation and the Sea,* by the Commission on Marine Science, Engineering, and Resources (Stratton Commission). The recommendations of the Stratton Commission led to the creation of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in 1970 and the transfer into this new agency of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries), then the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries.

The Stratton Commission also laid the groundwork for the passage of the Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976. A principal feature of the Act was the creation of eight (8) regional Fishery Management Councils that represented a decentralized, participatory system with significant stakeholder involvement in fisheries conservation and allocation decisions. Over the years, the eight councils have evolved individually and exhibit significant differences with respect to policies, practices, and levels of public participation and access.

Most stakeholders believe that the present system of fishery management needs improvement, but they are unsure about the nature of the problem, the type of change required, the possible options, and how best to measure progress.

As the diverse interests of marine resource stakeholders increasingly diverge, and as the political resolve to reshape existing legal and regulatory processes grows, there is a critical need for a systematic evaluation of fisheries management and the process of public participation in that management. To generate information important to the pending reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA, P.L. 94-265), Congress and the National Marine Fisheries Service are working to better understand ways for the United States to fulfill its responsibilities in marine stewardship. Recent and ongoing evaluation efforts include: the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, Congressional hearings on Magnuson-Stevens Act reauthorization, and a number of Congressionally mandated studies (key works: National Academy of Public Administration, Court, Congress and Constituencies: Managing Fisheries by Default; National Academy of Science, Science and Its Role in the National Marine Fisheries Service; Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee, A Perspective on the National Marine Fisheries Service: Issues and Recommendations); and National Academy of Public Administration (Kammer Report), An Independent Assessment of the Resource Requirement for the National Marine Fisheries Service.

A key recommendation of the Kammer Report is that "The (NOAA Fisheries) Assistant Administrator design and implement processes for developing and evaluating its programs and updating its policies that involve constituents and partners where these groups or individuals have expertise and/or will be affected." This project is a response to that recommendation.

## 1.2 How the Project was Conducted

NOAA Fisheries, working with the Pacific States Fisheries Management Commission, contracted with **M**errell**K**atsouros LLP to schedule a series of regional constituent sessions and to evaluate constituent's e-mail communications. The purpose of the sessions was to gather public input on ways to improve the effectiveness of NOAA Fisheries and its management of living marine resources.

The regional sessions were a collaborative effort that involved all major marine fisheries interests. The primary objective was to assemble and analyze the diverse opinions, attitudes, and perspectives of marine resource stakeholders as they relate to the broad themes of U.S. fisheries management. A secondary objective was to identify possible performance measures.

The meetings were announced in the *Federal Register*, on the NOAA Fisheries web page, and on the web page of each of the regional Fishery Management Councils. In addition, stakeholders unable to participate at the regional sessions were encouraged to use the E-Comments pilot program to share their views. The following questions were developed to assist stakeholders:

1. What are the most important issue facing fisheries in your region?

2. Who has responsibility over this issue? If unclear or uncertain, who should be in charge?

3. Does the solution require (a) no change to the present administrative or statutory structure; (b) administrative changes, and if so what would you propose; or (c) statutory changes, and if so, what would they be?

4. How could one measure if the solution is being properly implemented and working?

5. Briefly describe the best way to keep you informed about changes within NOAA Fisheries and fisheries management?

The constituent sessions for the Gulf of Mexico region were held in conjunction with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council. The Council graciously arranged and announced the constituent sessions which were held on July 15-16, 2003, in Naples, Florida. One hundred and fourteen stakeholders participated in the session. Twenty-nine

of the stakeholders made statements. In addition, twenty-five email messages were received that commented on fisheries management in the region.

At the beginning of the each session, Dr. William Hogarth presented his views on the status of U.S. Marine Fisheries. Dr. Hogarth's presentation is summarized in Chapter 2, and a copy of his visual aids is available in Appendix 2. There was also a discussion about the region's fisheries led by Dr. Hogarth and the NOAA Fisheries Regional and Science Center Directors. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the Regional Council, the fisheries under its management, and important topics now being considered. After the presentations, the stakeholders presented their views. A summary of the stakeholders' comments is contained in Chapter 4.

# CHAPTER 2

# U.S. MARINE FISHERIES – PRESENTATION BY DR. WILLIAM HOGARTH

This chapter contains a summary of the national status of U.S. Marine Fisheries presented at the regional constituent sessions by the Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries, Dr. William Hogarth. Appendix 2 contains the slides used by Dr. Hogarth at the Gulf of Mexico meetings.

The following are excerpts from Dr. Hogarth's opening remarks:

> *…We do have great fisheries in this country. We know that management works, and it's just a matter of working together.*
>
> *…We're responsible and you're responsible for managing around 952 stocks, of those, 259 of them are considered major, and some are considered minor stocks. When we say minor, the only reason is because we look at it from a standpoint of landings, because we have to give Congress a report. Each year we give Congress a report on major and minor stocks.*
>
> *Twenty species have come off the overfished list in the last five years, and 25 fish stocks have come off the overfishing list. We still have 86 overfished stocks, but about 70 of*

*those already have rebuilding plans in place. We implemented a schedule to have all 86 stocks with rebuilding plans no later than 2005 [two of them in 2005, the rest (84) of them will probably be in 2004)]. We added seven species last year and we took six off. So it goes back and forth when you manage a stock for conservation and use.*

*If you look at the commercial fishery in the U.S., we land about 9.5 billion pounds in the U.S. and we're the world's fourth largest fishing nation. These fish have value at dockside of about 3.2 billion dollars. We import about 18.5 billion dollars in fishery products and we export only 11.8. So, we have a deficit in fisheries related trade.*

*…U.S. Citizens consumed about 14.8 pounds per person in 2001 and last year shrimp was the number one crop in the U.S. It overtook tuna.*

*…We are importing between 60 and 70 percent of all the seafood we utilize in this country, and we're importing about 88 percent of all the shrimp utilized in the U.S. We import shrimp from 33 countries. We do not currently have the standards on antibiotics in this country that other countries have. We are getting quite a few shrimp imported into the U.S. and, in turn, that has really flooded the market. The imports are really becoming a problem for our fisheries and we need to look at how we can help in this effort. I think aquaculture from foreign countries is*

*producing very inexpensive products. A lot of money is being invested.*

*We don't do much in this country with aquaculture. We are in the process now of trying to determine the role of NOAA Fisheries and how we should be doing aquaculture.*

*…The recreational fishing industry has over 17 million people that fish. They make 65 to 70 million fishing trips per year. They land about 135,000 metric tons…*

*…Over 17 million Americans participated in recreational fishing in 2002, totaling over 65 million fishing trips and supporting almost 350,000 jobs with an economic impact of more than $30 billion.*

*…The economic value of the commercial fishery is also around 28 to 29 billion dollars. Therefore, we're dealing with a total fishery worth close to 60 billion dollars in gross national product. If you look at management of overfished stocks and opportunities, that could be increased at least 15 to 20 percent. So, we have our work cut out for us.*

*We have about 349,000 jobs supported by the recreational industry. Factoring in personal incomes and related expenditures, it really gets to be very big business.*

*The top ranking recreational fishing state, of course, is Florida. California follows in second place. If Texas provided data, Texas would be ranked number three.*

Excerpts from Dr. Hogarth's slide presentation follow:

*THE STATE OF U.S. MARINE FISHERIES IS IMPROVING*

*…The State of U.S. Marine Fisheries is improving. We have been making steady, incremental, progress in improving the nation's marine fisheries.*

- *Status of Stocks: 932 federally managed stocks*
- *259 major stocks account for 99.9 percent of total landings, the rest (672) are considered minor stocks*
- *695 stocks have unknown status*
- *86 stocks still listed as overfished, but we continue our commitment to rebuilding*

*LET ME TELL YOU WHY:*

*I think we are improving. In the last five years, we have reduced the number of stocks from both the overfished and overfishing categories:*

- *Overfished – 20 removed, 7 added = +13*

- *Overfishing – 26 removed, 12 added = +14*

- *70 rebuilding plans have been adopted*

*MY PRESENTATION WILL FOCUS ON:*

- *Value of U.S. Marine Fisheries: Commercial statistics, Recreational Statistics, and Import/Export Statistics*

- *How the Region is Doing*

- *Challenges and Goals*

*VALUE OF U.S. MARINE FISHERIES*
*U.S. RECREATIONAL FISHERY STATISTICS*

- *Over 17 million participants*

- *Over 65 million fishing trips per year*

- *Over 135 thousand metric tons landed per year*

- *Economic impact of more than $30 billion*

- *More than 349,000 jobs supported*

*Ecosystem-based management affects the recreational industry quite a bit in that one needs to look at Marine Protected Areas or other things that may protect fish. If you look at Number 3 of my goals, where it says stabilize for maximum economic benefit, I think that recreational is part of the maximum economic benefit. The big issue in the future is the allocation between commercial and recreational because the recreational industry is growing.*

*MY TEN GOALS*

1. *Review National Standard 1 Guidelines*

2. *Explore Ecosystem-based management*

3. *Stabilize fisheries for maximum economic benefit and improve rebuilding plans*

4. *Increase communication and cooperative research with industry*

5. *Promote U.S. seafood*

6. *Incorporate ocean observing system*

7. *Minimize bycatch and develop new gear technology*

8. *Develop pilot projects in aquaculture*

9. *Improve timeliness and responsiveness in management*

10. *Export gear technology internationally to help recover endangered species*

*We have made great progress in management. There are a lot of success stories, but we still have a lot of work to do. We need to make sure that we take credit for what has been done and we should be dedicated to improving management.*

*Summer flounder is coming off the overfished list. The surfclam and ocean quahog are no longer classified as overfished. Squid and butterfish are no longer overfished. Salmon runs this year are very high.*

*The listing criteria for the Endangered Species list, the Jeopardy Standard, and Essential Fish Habitat are all issues that must be covered. The Council is required to designate Essential Fish Habitat for all of these 952 species for four life stages.*

*We need to be timelier and more responsive. I don't know if we can do anything with that before Magnuson is reauthorized, which will probably be in about a year.*

*We are trying to beef up our Constituent Services in NOAA Fisheries.*

*My* [Hogarth's] *job, and people might disagree with me, but the job I took is to manage these fisheries for maximum economic benefit to the country. And that means that you are going to have stocks that will be reduced to probably 50 to 60 percent of their natural levels. I feel pretty confident that cooperative research is an excellent way to make progress.*

*We need to do a better job of promoting seafood in the U.S. Just because a stock is overfished, does not mean it should not be utilized by the American public if a rebuilding plan is in place.*

# CHAPTER 3
# THE GULF OF MEXICO REGION

## 3.1 The Council

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC) is one of eight regional fishery management councils established by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act). The Council manages fisheries in federal waters off the coasts of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and west Florida. The Council has 17 voting members – 1 from the National Marine Fisheries Service, 5 from the state fishery agencies, and 11 public members appointed by the Secretary of Commerce.

The GMFMC region manages many valuable fisheries. Of these fisheries, the Gulf shrimp fishery landed more than $378 million in product in 2002. Crustaceans, although not as impressive as the shrimp industry, make up another fishery group. They include shrimp, spiny lobster, and stone crab. The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is responsible for preserving this group as well as corals and coral reef resources. Furthermore, the Council manages three finfish fisheries; reef fish, coastal pelagic, and red drum.

The reef fish fishery of the Gulf of Mexico region consists of more than 40 stocks of snappers, groupers, and related species and results in landings by recreational and commercial fishermen of about 30 million pounds annually. In addition to the ten stocks managed jointly with the South Atlantic Council, the Gulf Council has 61 stocks under its direct authority.

### 3.2 Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) For the Region

The Council prepares fishery plans, which are designed to manage fishery resources from state waters out to the 200-mile limit in the Gulf of Mexico. These offshore waters are in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of the United States.

The Council is responsible for seven fishery management plans. The plans are:

1. Gulf of Mexico/South Atlantic Spiny Lobster Fishery Management Plan

The FMP largely extends Florida's rules regulating the fishery to the EEZ throughout the range of the fishery, i.e. North Carolina to Texas. The management measures include: specifying minimum size limit and closed session, requiring degradable panels, prohibiting use of spears or hooks, limited attractant to 200 per vessel, required attractants to be held in shaded box, required trap number and color code be

displayed, created special recreational two-day sessions before commercial sections, prohibited possession of egg-baring lobster, and required reporting of landings.

2. Coastal Migratory Pelagics of the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Fishery Management Plan

The management of coastal migratory pelagics, including king mackerel and Spanish mackerel is an excellent example of the effectiveness of proper management. Prior to the 1980s, mackerel catches were essentially unregulated. Introduction of airplane reconnaissance and large power-assisted gillnet vessels in the commercial fishery took advantage of the schooling nature of the fish and greatly increased catches. Harvests by both recreational and commercial fishermen in the 1970s and early 1980s led to overfishing. Federal regulations were implemented in 1983 to control harvest and rebuild dwindling stocks of king and Spanish mackerel. Different migratory groups were later managed separately, and quotas, bag limits and trip limits established to rebuild the mackerel fisheries. Gear regulations included the elimination of drift gillnets in 1990. Management measures developed by the South Atlantic Council for the Atlantic migratory groups of king and Spanish mackerel have been very successful in rebuilding stocks, and the mackerel fishery remains sustainable and economically viable for both recreational and commercial fishermen.

3. Coral Reefs Fishery Management Plan

The FMP/DEIS, complete in 1982, described the coral communities throughout the jurisdictions of the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils. The FMP prohibited the harvest of stoney coral and seafans except by scientific permit. It established Habitat Areas of particular concern (HAPC) in the Gulf and Atlantic where the use of chemicals used by fish collectors near coral reefs. It established a data reporting system for permittees.

4. Red Drum Fishery Management Plan

The Red Drum fishery has been closed in the EEZ since 1989, and commercial and recreational fishing occurs only in state waters. The FMP provided for an incidental catch allowance for commercial net and shrimp fishermen.

5. Stone Crab Fishery Management Plan

The Fishery Management Plan for the Stone Crab Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico was implemented on September 30, 1979. The FMP resolved an armed conflict over competing gear use between stone crab and shrimp fishermen operating in the EEZ off southwest Florida and extended Florida's rules regulating the fishery into the EEZ. The management area of the FMP is limited to the EEZ seaward of the west coast of Florida in the Gulf of Mexico and the council works closely with the state.

6. Shrimp Fishery Management Plan

The shrimp FMP was implemented as federal regulation on May 20, 1981. The principal thrust of the plan was to enhance yield in volume and value by deferring harvest of small shrimp to provide for growth. Principle action included 1) establishing a cooperative Tortugas Shrimp Sanctuary with the state of Florida to close a shrimp trawling area where small pink shrimp comprise the majority of the population most of the time; 2) a cooperative 45-day seasonal closure with the state of Texas to protect small brown shrimp emigrating from bay nursery areas; and 3) seasonal zoning of an area of Florida Bay for either shrimp or stone crab fishing to avoid gear conflict. Federal permits are now required for fishing in the EEZ. Bycatch Reduction Devices and Turtle Excluder Devices are also required.

7. Reef Fish Resources Fishery Management Plan

The Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan was implemented in November of 1984. There are 115 species covered in the Reef Fish FMP. The regulations, designed to rebuild declining reef fish stocks, included 1) prohibitions on the use of fish traps, roller trawls, and powerhead-equipped spear guns within an inshore stressed area; 2) a minimum size limit of 13 inches total length for red snapper with the exceptions that for-hire boats were exempted until 1987 and each angler could keep five undersize fish; and, 3) data reporting requirements.

On July 29, 1999, the Council, in complying with the SFA, developed two generic amendments that address the seven FMPs. The first of these was an amendment that identified and described essential fish habitat (EFH) for the estuarine and marine-life stages of the stocks in the Council's FMPs for shrimp, red drum, reef fish, stone crab, coral, and coral reef resource, and spiny lobster fishery resources in the Gulf of Mexico, as well as the Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic. The second generic amendment principally addressed bycatch, overfishing criteria, rebuilding periods, and fishing communities.

While a rebuilding plan for red snapper has not yet been put in place, there have been significant improvements in the fishery: a goal of achieving a 20 % SSBR goal was established, seasonal closures adopted, size limits and bag limits both increased, and bycatch reduction in the shrimp fishery. An amendment is being developed.

# CHAPTER 4
# ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY CONSTITUENTS

This chapter provides a summary of the issues presented by participants at the constituent sessions and provided electronically through e-mail. The issues have been divided into national and regional topics. For this report, regional issues are issues that primarily affect the Gulf of Mexico region.

Sessions of the 2003 NOAA fisheries constituent meetings for the Gulf of Mexico region were held July 15th and 16th in Naples, Florida, in conjunction with a meeting of the Gulf of Mexico Regional Fishery Management Council. These constituent sessions had 114 attendees, 29 of whom made presentations during the sessions. Twenty-five e-mail messages were received from constituents from the Gulf region. The national issues identified by constituents were divided into sixteen topics, Gulf of Mexico constituents commented on fifteen. The sixteen topics: aquaculture-marine; bycatch; councils; ecosystem management; enforcement; economic, social, cultural; essential fish habitat; infrastructure – land-based; management, Magnuson Stevens Act; marine mammals; marine protected areas; NOAA leadership; overcapitalization/rationalization; Pew Oceans Commission, National Commission on Ocean Policy; regulatory streamlining; and science/data/observations. Responses to these issues are summarized below:

# NATIONAL ISSUES

National issues identified by constituents either at regional sessions or electronically, by topic in alphabetical order, are:

## 1. Aquaculture - Marine

- NOAA Fisheries brings much expertise to the table, but should remember that aquaculture is farming
- NOAA should work with the individual states as well as other federal agencies
- Need to take pressure off the destructive practice of shrimp trawling by raising shrimp in farms
- Shrimpers who give up shrimping to raise shrimp in farms should receive federal grants
- Use plant-eating fish in aquaculture operations, not carnivores
- After shutting down wild fisheries, we need to provide massive government funding to retrain fishermen to become aquaculturalists or we'll loose the fishermen as well as the fish
- We should dedicate ourselves to growing food resources in the sea rather than hunting them

**2. Bycatch**

- US progress in gear technology needs to be exported to other countries
- NOAA's Pascagoula laboratory is a national resource
- NOAA/Councils should shut down any fishery with over 5% bycatch
- Bycatch reduction is a great area for cooperative industry/government research
- Eliminating bycatch in the shrimp fishery would allow many species to recover

**3. Councils**

- Need to develop job descriptions for members and committee members
- Need to separate conservation decisions from allocation decisions
- Meetings should be set at times of week and day to encourage public participation
- Conflict of interest by council members: actual in that members vote their self-interest, and in appearance with most members having strong industry ties
- No industry leader should be allowed to vote on how fisheries are managed
- Insider influence and conflicts of interest must be stopped now! Fisheries stocks are depleted because industry representatives sit on regulatory boards

- Council member representation balance issues: need more public members, more/less recreational members, need charter/head boat representatives, diver and boater representatives, representatives from the conservation community. BUT also need expertise and participation of industry
- Fisheries Management Councils should be advisory only; NOAA Fisheries should have more say in the recommendations made by the councils
- Council meetings are repeatedly held in expensive hotel miles away from large airports or fishing towns. The cost of going to a council meeting often excludes the people who depend on the resource

**4. <u>Ecosystem Management</u>**

- Demonstration projects are a good idea
- Support/oppose Pew Commission recommendations (both views expressed)
- Need to look at the carrying capacity of the ecosystem
- Management of individual stocks is inadequate. Need more holistic approach
- Every animal, including every type of fish, has a right to live and procreate in its natural habitat
- Should create an independent department of the oceans that would have conservation of ocean ecosystems as its highest priority

- Manage fisheries under a system that takes the health and needs of the entire ecosystem into account
- The principal objective of American marine fishery policy should be to protect marine ecosystems

**5. Economic, social, cultural issues**

- *No comments*

**6. Enforcement**

- Need more and better enforcement
- Need simpler, enforceable regulations
- Need more severe penalties for some infractions
- Crime is hurting the business climate and hurts the honest fisherman
- Enforce better logbooks by taking violators' licenses
- Stop night poaching
- The Coast Guard is more interested in terrorism and drug trafficking than fisheries
- Police the ports for illegal catches
- Regulate all fishing with extreme force

**7. Essential Fish Habitat**

- The draft Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) are thousands of pages long and unreadable
- Most of the loss of EFH is from activities other than fishing - such as pollution, degradation of estuaries
- Need better coastal management
- Might work more with Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) National Estuary Program
- We are loosing EFH through economic development
- Stop bottom trawling
- NOAA needs to pay particular attention to what other federal agencies are doing to critical juvenile fish habitat such as coastal wetlands
- The assault on our coastal wetlands and marshlands is a major contributor to the loss of EFH
- Federally-approved dredging projects destroy wetlands

**8. Infrastructure – Land-based**

- Coastal land is becoming too expensive for fisheries-related use

**9. Management, Magnuson-Stevens Act**

- Magnuson-Stevens Act allows for the will of the people – good act

- Progress has been made in rebuilding stocks
- Need sweeping reform of federal law to protect our marine resources
- Need to curtail long-line fishing in Gulf of Mexico, pelagic species are being destroyed and small fish killed
- Management should force a change to labor-intensive fishing practices that are friendly to the environment
- The United Nations should take over fisheries management
- Americans overdo anything that involves money, including overfishing
- Stop overfishing and non-selective fishing
- Fisheries Management Councils mismanage fisheries
- Need to stop all pollution - legal or illegal
- Serial overfishing has lead to crisis management
- Protecting ocean ecosystems and managing ocean resources will require a fundamental reform of current law, and the way the law is administered
- When one species becomes more regulated, fishers move to other species that then become overexploited. Need to stop fishing down the food chain
- Management seems incapable of reacting in a timely manner
- All fishermen, commercial or recreational, should be licensed to fish and subject to the restrictions of the license
- A permanent fishery conservation trust fund should be established

**10. Marine Mammals**

- Are being killed unnecessarily by non-selective commercial fishing operations

**11. Marine Protected Areas**

- Should only be established for good scientific reasons and should require scientific monitoring
- Coral reef Marine Protected Areas have not worked for commercially important species
- There are inadequate exclusionary reserves to give species room to repopulate

**12. NOAA Leadership**

- NOAA Fisheries Assistant Administrator (AA) Bill Hogarth has been most communicative and best AA
- NOAA Fisheries should take lead to have cohesive management of fisheries resources in all waters- state, federal, and international
- Government bodies have lost their way – no longer doing what is right but instead protecting the profits of special interests
- NOAA Fisheries should have a 100-year mission statement for fisheries that ignores the need for profits now
- Department of Commerce should stop promoting the seas as an extraction industry – stop it and you'll be in history books
- NOAA Fisheries should have more authority and the councils less

- NOAA Fisheries needs the authority to manage fisheries in the face of uncertainty using the precautionary approach
- Leadership needs to move forward and make difficult decisions and not back down in the face of lawsuits

**13. Overcapitalization/Rationalization**

- Need to stop over-investing in both the commercial and recreational industries

**14. Pew Oceans Commission, National Commission on Ocean Policy**

- Pew provides a good holistic approach to fisheries management

**15. Regulatory Streamlining**

- The system has to be streamlined so regulations can be put in place quickly. Regardless of the type or effectiveness of a regulation, it does no good if it isn't in place
- NOAA Fisheries needs to do better job at meeting deadlines

**16. Science/Data/Observations**

- Need better data on recreational catch
- Need better science, more stock assessments
- Need more cooperative research with industry – but industry needs help writing grants

- Need electronic logbooks
- Science needs to be made simpler for the layman
- Councils sometimes do not use science in their decisions
- Councils should defer to the scientific committee that measures stock size
- NOAA regional labs doing a good job
- Need Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) on every vessel
- Need more careful monitoring of fish populations
- Need to have holistic comprehensive basic marine research on the natural histories and interdependence of all species
- No standardized system exists for the collection of fishing information

## REGIONAL ISSUES

Topics identified by the constituents, specific to the Gulf of Mexico, are the following:

- TEDs used in shrimp fisheries lose too much of the catch
- Delay implementing the TED regulations in the Gulf of Mexico
- Test new shrimp regulations before implementing them
- The trolling study to see if fishing for pelagic species affected gag grouper was poorly conducted

- Rapid growth of recreational fishing is putting pressure on resources
- Now over 922,000 recreational vessels in Florida
- NOAA needs to establish a world class laboratory in Galveston to explore the Gulf ecosystem as a whole